

# Can we enhance the social communication skills of preschool children with Autism Spectrum Conditions through play?

<b>Submission date</b> 09/03/2012	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
		<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 11/04/2012	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 06/12/2019	<b>Condition category</b> Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
		<input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Research indicates that children with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASCs) can be taught to play via appropriate intervention, and that this may also improve their social communication skills. However, research in this area is currently lacking. We are interested in exploring whether the social interactions of preschool children with social communication difficulties can be enhanced by developing their play skills.

### Who can participate?

Preschool children attending a Children's Centre preschool in Hampshire can attend. Children do not need to have a diagnosis of an ASC, but do need to have a funded special educational needs place at preschool relating to their social communication difficulties.

### What does the study involve?

After consent is given, a researcher visits the child at their preschool setting to conduct some assessments. Children will then be randomly selected to either receive a short individual play intervention each day for two weeks at preschool, or to continue their preschool as usual for two weeks. The intervention, called Identiplay, lasts for 10 minutes each day and will be delivered by the child's usual key worker. Identiplay teaches play and has been used with many preschool children with social communication needs across Hampshire. After these two weeks the researcher will visit the participant at preschool again and repeat the assessments. After a further six weeks this will be repeated.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

You would be helping us to understand the links between play and social communication skills in individuals with ASCs. There are no risks involved in taking part.

### Where is the study run from?

University of Southampton (UK).

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?  
From September 2011 to March 2012.

Who is funding the study?  
University of Southampton (UK).

Who is the main contact?  
Miss Chloe Allen  
cla1g09@soton.ac.uk

## Contact information

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
Miss Chloe Allen

**Contact details**  
University of Southampton  
University Road  
Southampton  
United Kingdom  
SO151BJ

## Additional identifiers

**Protocol serial number**  
N/A

## Study information

**Scientific Title**  
Can we enhance the social communication skills of preschool children with Autism Spectrum Conditions through play?

**Study objectives**  
Autism spectrum conditions (ASCs) include autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), and Asperger's disorder, and are characterised by deficits in social interaction, communication, and imagination.

**Hypothesis:**  
Exposure to an intervention aiming to enhance play skills will result in a significant increase in play skills, social play development and the frequency of social communication behaviours.

**Ethics approval required**  
Old ethics approval format

**Ethics approval(s)**  
Department of Psychology Ethics Committee, University of Southampton, 08/08/2011, ref: 704

**Study design**

Multicentre randomised controlled trial

**Primary study design**

Interventional

**Study type(s)**

Quality of life

**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Preschool children with Autism Spectrum Conditions

**Interventions**

Children will be matched into pairs and then randomly allocated to either the intervention or treatment as usual condition. The play intervention will take place daily at preschool with the child and their keyworker working one to one. The intervention used is known as Identiplay.

**Intervention Type**

Behavioural

**Primary outcome(s)**

1. Preschool teacher-rated SDQ
2. Symbolic Play Test
3. 10-minute video recording of child engaged in free play with peers coded using the M-COSMIC, developmental and social level of play

**Key secondary outcome(s)**

No secondary outcome measures

**Completion date**

19/03/2012

**Eligibility****Key inclusion criteria**

1. Attending a special educational needs funded place for children with social communication needs in a children's centre
2. Aged between 2 years 9 months and 5 years
3. Written parental consent

**Participant type(s)**

Patient

**Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

**Age group**

Child

**Lower age limit**

2 years

**Upper age limit**

5 years

**Sex**

All

**Key exclusion criteria**

1. Speech and language delay in the absence of social communication concerns
2. Major medical conditions impacting on the effects of the intervention

**Date of first enrolment**

01/09/2011

**Date of final enrolment**

19/03/2012

**Locations****Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

**Study participating centre**

University of Southampton

Southampton

United Kingdom

SO151BJ

**Sponsor information****Organisation**

University of Southampton (UK)

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/01ryk1543>

**Funder(s)**

Funder type

University/education

**Funder Name**

University of Southampton (UK)

**Alternative Name(s)**

University of Southampton UK

**Funding Body Type**

Government organisation

**Funding Body Subtype**

Universities (academic only)

**Location**

United Kingdom

## Results and Publications

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**

**IPD sharing plan summary**

Not provided at time of registration

**Study outputs**

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes